

President's Message – September 5

As your President, and in my role as Vice-President of the Métis National Council, I am always reflecting on how our Métis Nation can best protect and champion our Elders and Youth. Our Elders are the knowledge keepers of our Nation: safeguarding our culture, teaching our languages and providing our people with wise counsel and clear direction. It is vital to our culture and our way of life that we continue to recognize our Elders and treat them with the greatest respect. Our Youth are the future of our Nation: the keepers of our destiny, who will carry forward our Nation for the generations to come. We must engage our Youth to take pride in our culture and to take our rights and responsibilities as Métis Citizens to heart.

To build a strong, healthy and prosperous future for Manitoba's Métis Citizens, it is vitally important that we seek the guidance of our Elders and determine the vision of our Youth. This is why I always take special care to welcome and encourage participation from Elders and Youth when there are discussions on how to build that future.

A prime example is our annual Elders Gathering, held this year on August 30 and 31 at Grant's Old Mill. This location is of special significance for Métis Citizens, being a living monument to Cuthbert Grant, the first leader of our Métis Nation, who brought us to the Victory of Frog Plain in 1816. Our Elders, George Fleury and Norman Meade, blessed the start of this year's Gathering, opening two days of discussion on building our Métis Nation. Our Provincial Youth Advisory Committee also attended, offering respectful attention and gratitude for the knowledge, issues and ideas shared by our Elders throughout the Gathering.

Another excellent example is the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program being led by three Métis women in Dauphin. This program will support Elder language-keepers to transmit our Michif language heritage to younger generations, using tried-and-tested tools for immersing learners in language. Community-led projects to support the revitalization of our languages will in turn strengthen our Citizens' cultural knowledge and pride.

As we move forward together, you will see many new initiatives designed by the MMF to serve Métis Elders and support our Youth. We are developing the plans to start building seniors' homes, personal care homes, and other types of housing to address the diverse needs of our Métis Elders. We are working to connect more Elders to our Prescription Drug Program for Seniors, so none will ever again need to choose between medicines and meals. We are also expanding and diversifying resources for Youth and students to advance their knowledge and careers, so that our younger generations have the know-how and security to pursue successful careers, keep their families strong, and to support and care for their children, parents, and grandparents.

In such ways, we are building a solid foundation that will protect our families in times ahead. This is exactly what Métis Nationhood is all about: taking care of one another, serving our Elders and protecting our Youth. This is what your Métis Government stands for and is working towards. It is a collective effort, and I encourage you to bring your knowledge, your voice and your vision to our Annual General Assembly and Youth Conference later this month from September 21 to 23. These exciting life-changing opportunities can only be seized when we work together.

In closing, I extend hope, sympathy and prayers to any who may be ill, grieving or shut in. I wish you healing, strength and comfort as summer turns into fall. To our Elders, I share my gratitude and respect for your sacrifices, your wisdom and your insight. To our Youth, I encourage you to keep connected to our culture and community as we write a new chapter in Métis Nation history. I look forward to seeing you all at our Annual General Assembly.

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